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GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

SAN JUAN

ADDRESS ALL OFFICIAL COMMUNICATIONS TO THE COMMISSIONER OF EDUCATION SAN JUAN, P. R.

October 23, 1939

Circular Letter No. 101

To : Superintendents, Principals, and High School English Teachers

Re : THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN HIGH SCHOOL

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Teachers of high school English courses should keep in mind that the "Tentative Outlines" are guides, not goals. These outlines should be followed but should not become the objectives of the courses. Since the principal objective of all high school English courses is developing the ability of pupils to read and write English, teachers should guard against falling into the habit of concentrating on "covering" a certain number of selections. It is of utmost importance that adequate time and effort be given to proper drills and exercises designed to train pupils to express themselves in English. The following points should be given careful consideration:

1. Composition Work

Both written and oral composition work should be given adequate time and attention. The marks given for composition work must be averaged with other marks for the final grades. Test themes must be given and a weight equal to that of other tests must be placed on them.

Written composition work should all be done during class periods. The teachers should see that pupils have access to adequate dictionaries during the periods devoted to composition work. The teacher should collect the compositions at the end of the

period and should mark them for correction. Pupils should have in their possession a copy of the marking code to help them in making the proper corrections. The corrections should be made during a class period which the teacher should conduct as a laboratory period. Both the original and corrected copies should be placed in folders and kept in the room bookcase.

2. Tests

Attention is again called to the fact that some essay type of tests should be given as well as the short answer type. Many times pupils are able to do well on the short answer type of test, but are not able to express themselves in correct English. Often the objective type of test merely tests the pupil's knowledge of factual material and in no way indicates his language ability.

The distribution curve should not be used in marking diagnostic and mastery tests. These tests are given for the purpose of determining what should be taught and the need for reteaching.

3. Mastery of Minimum Essentials

Pupils who have not mastered the minimum essentials given in the tentative outlines should not be promoted, that is, no pupil should be promoted to English II who can not recognize the different parts of speech, write a correct sentence, etc. In language work it is not possible to adhere strictly to the distribution curve for marking purposes. This is especially true in small groups. Pupils should be carefully tested to determine whether or not they have attained sufficient language ability to be promoted and only those pupils who show sufficient proficiency should be promoted to the following grade.

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4. Text Books

Again attention is called to the fact that in high school every pupil must provide himself with the text books required. Superintendents, principals, and teachers are requested to cooperate in this matter. It is impossible for work of high school level to be carried on when pupils do not have the proper materials. The list of text books as published by the Department of Education in Circular Letter No. 3 issued on July 7, 1939 includes Webster's Secondary Dictionary.

We appreciate your interest in improving the quality of English being spoken in our high schools and we feel sure that you will give your hearty cooperation to these details.

Very truly yours,

(Signed) JOSE M. GALLARDO
Commissioner of Education